



**SDOT**

Seattle Department of Transportation

# Fixing the Mercer 'Mess'

Presentation to City Council

September 14, 2004

# The Mercer 'Mess'

A Tangle of Barriers and Blockages



Barriers to Neighborhood Movement

Hostile Environment for Pedestrian & Bicycles

Weaving & Confusing Routes

# It's A Pedestrian Problem

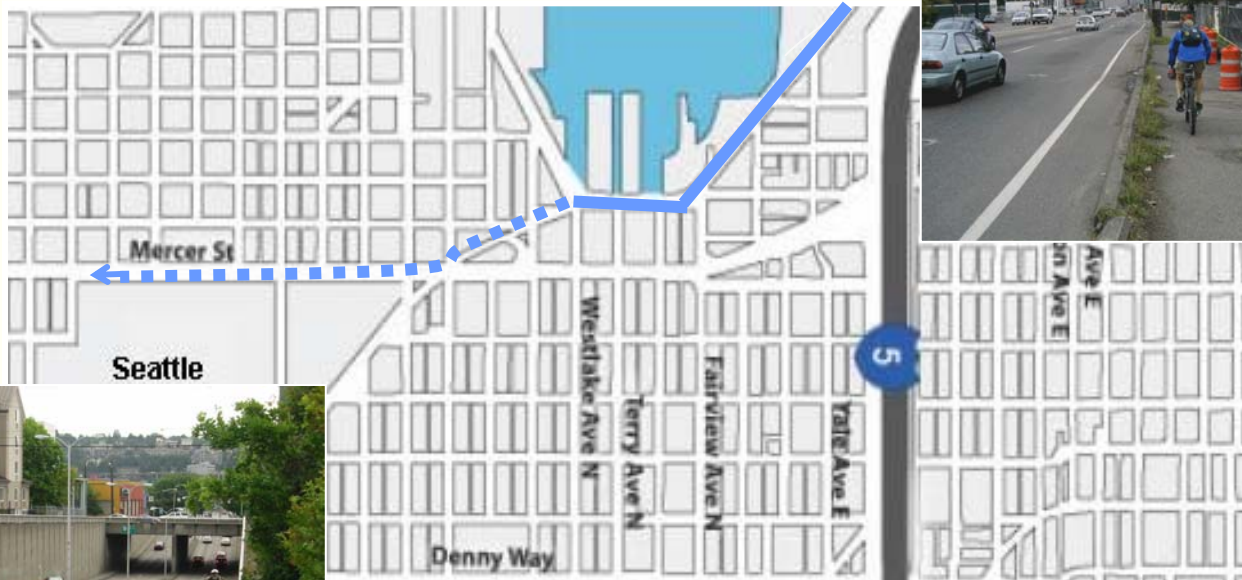
A Hostile Environment



Pedestrian traveling to SLU Park

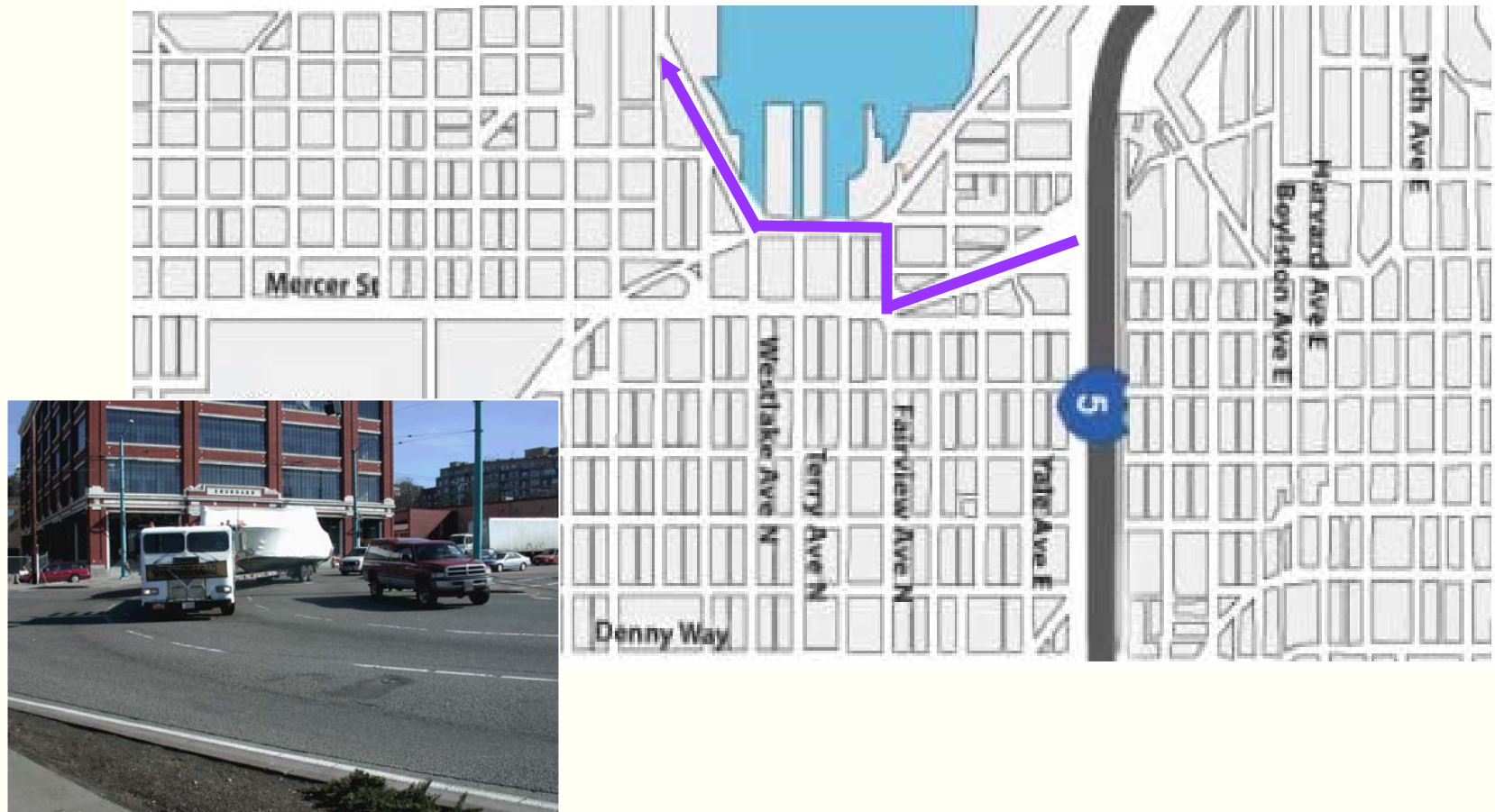
# It's A Bicycle Problem

A Hostile Environment



Bicyclist riding from Eastlake to  
the Seattle Center

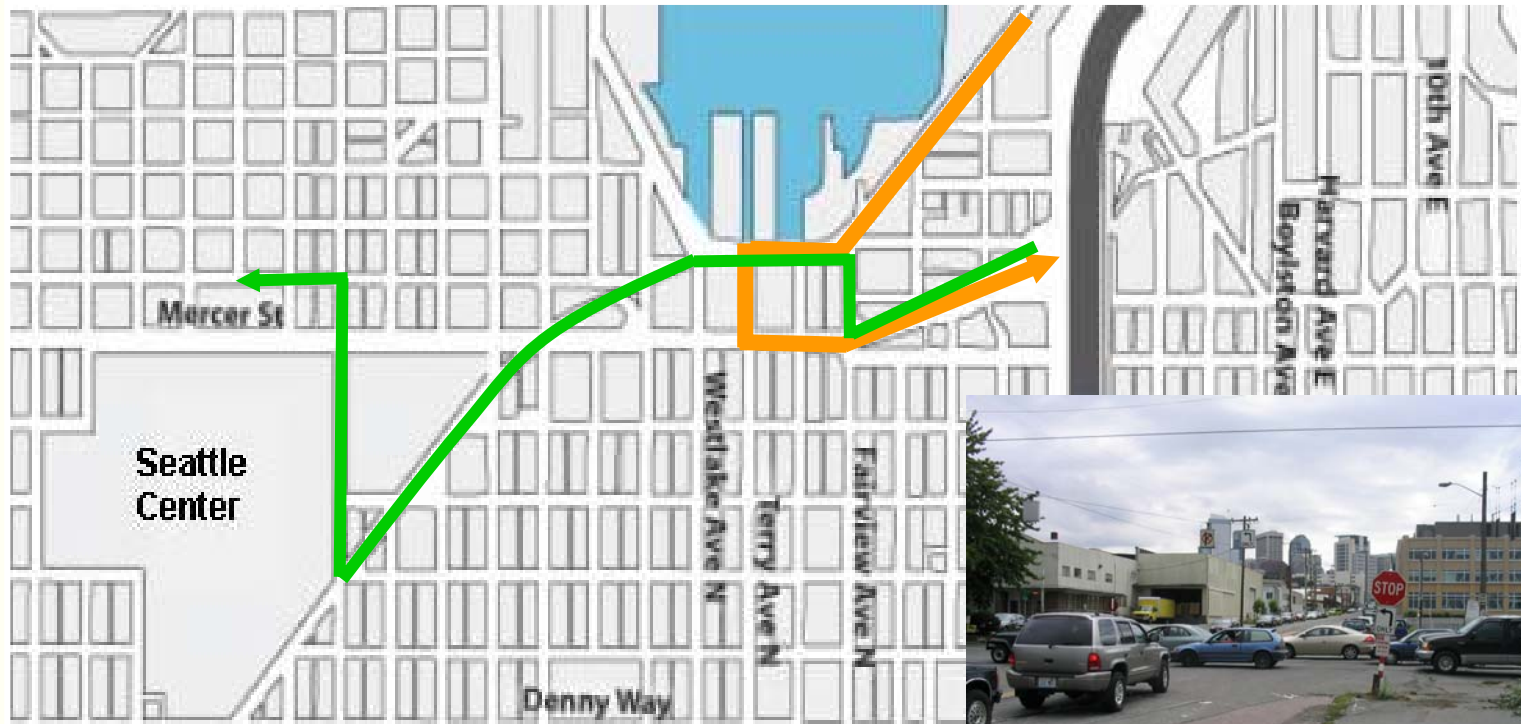
# It's A Freight Problem



Truck from I-5 to Interbay



# It's a Car Problem

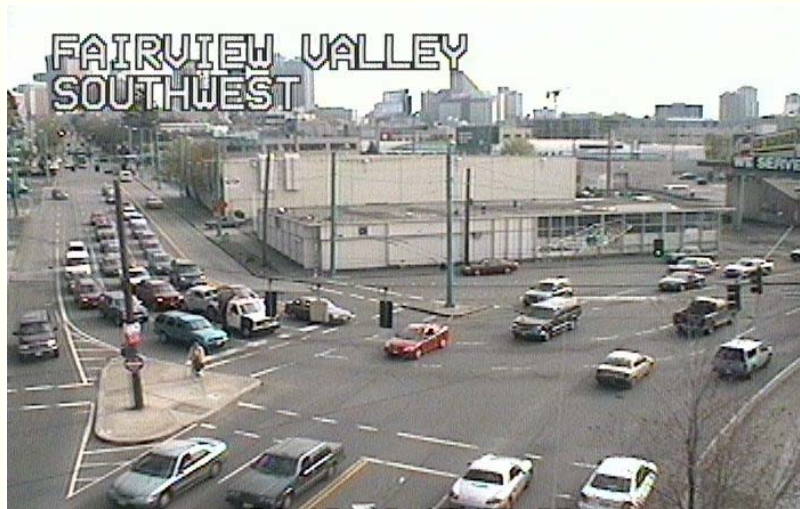


- **Traveling from Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center to I-5**
  - **Traveling from I-5 to Queen Anne**

**What is the Mercer Mess?**

# A Neighborhood Livability Problem

An unwelcome front door to an emerging neighborhood & for the 10 million annual visitors to Seattle Center



Isolates South Lake Union from adjacent neighborhoods

**What is the Mercer Mess?**

# A Neighborhood Livability Problem



A barrier to South Lake Union  
Park and other waterfront  
attractions





# We've Been Discussing This For Decades

Office Of The Mayor  
City of Seattle

Charles Royer, Mayor



December 31, 1985

1

2

3

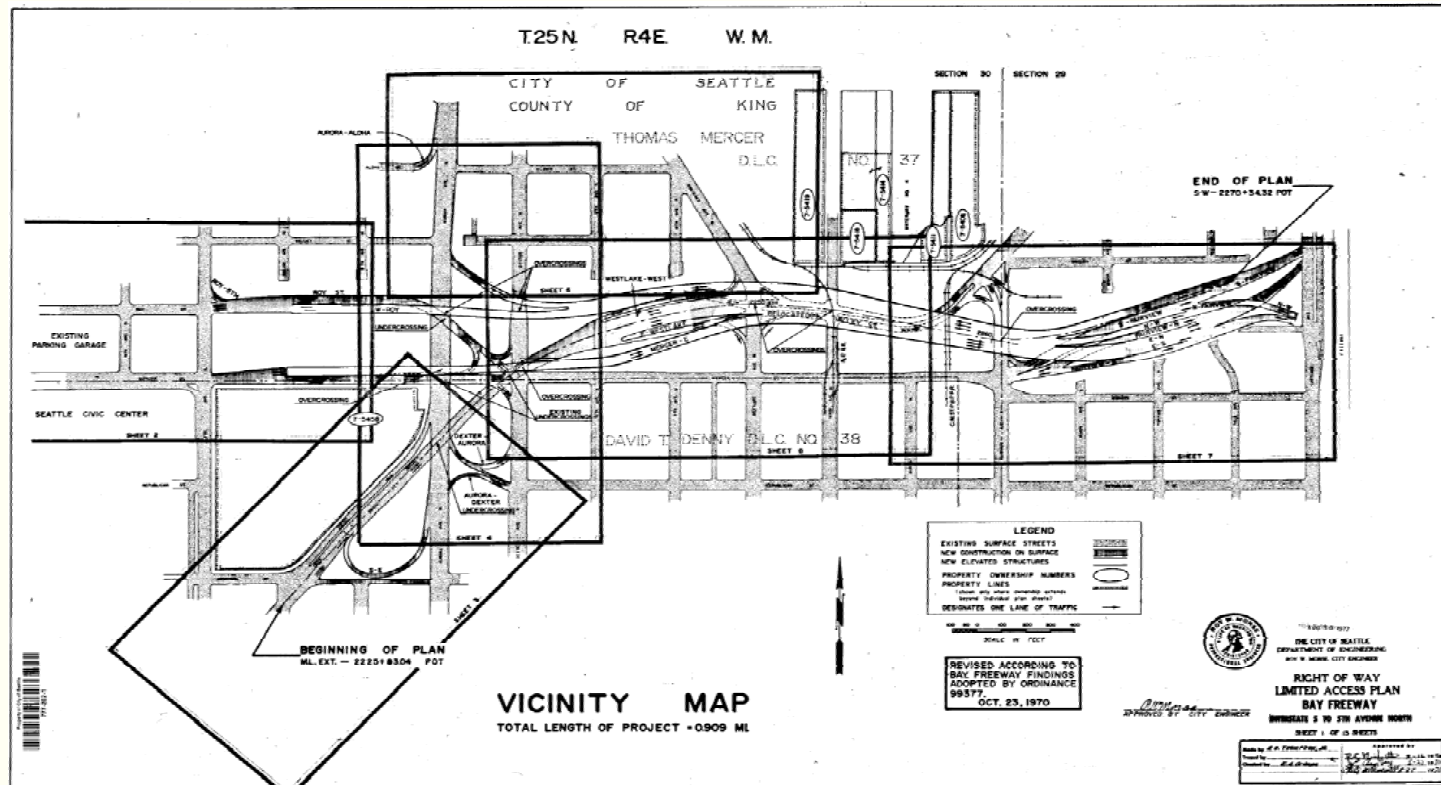
The Honorable Norm Rice  
Chair, South Lake Union Committee  
Seattle City Council

Dear Councilmember Rice:

I am pleased to submit my recommendations for the development of South Lake Union, including transportation improvements to the Mercer Corridor. My major goals in making these recommendations are threefold:

# Rejected Thinking

People realized an elevated structure was the wrong idea

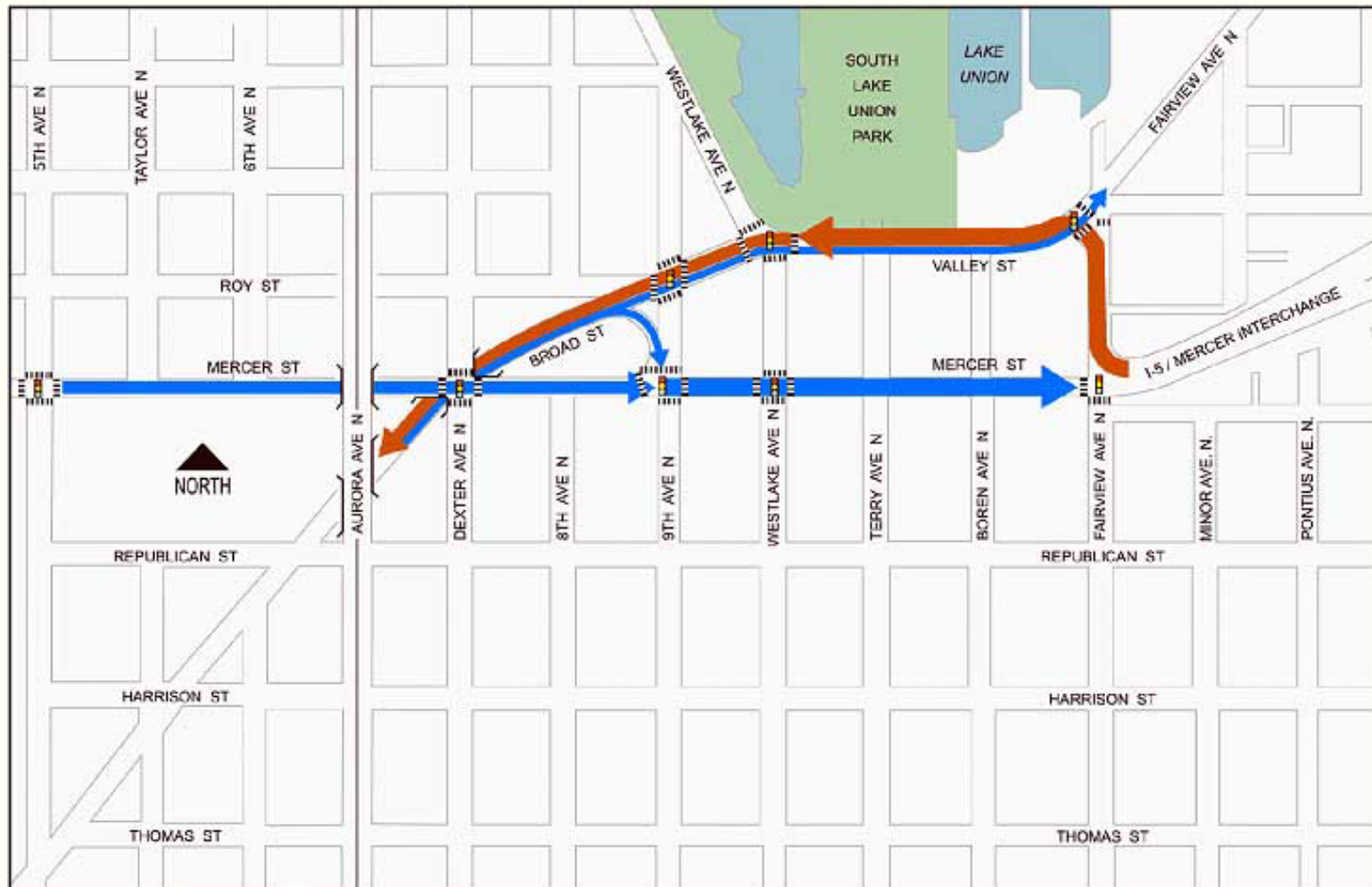


## Bay Freeway (1970)

# Strong Support for a New Direction

- South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan (1999)
  - No expressway
  - Policy to guide improvements
- Council Direction (1999-2003)
  - Adoption of plan policies and resolutions to guide transportation investments
  - Sold Bay Freeway properties
- Earthquake/Alaskan Way Viaduct & Seawall Project (2001)
  - Opportunities for connections to Aurora and Mercer Street
  - Funding possibilities
- South Lake Union Transportation Study (2004)
  - Strong community support for two-way Mercer Street
  - Compared two-way option with SLU Neighborhood Plan recommendations

# Today's Mercer Corridor





# Mercer and Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall - Project Coordination



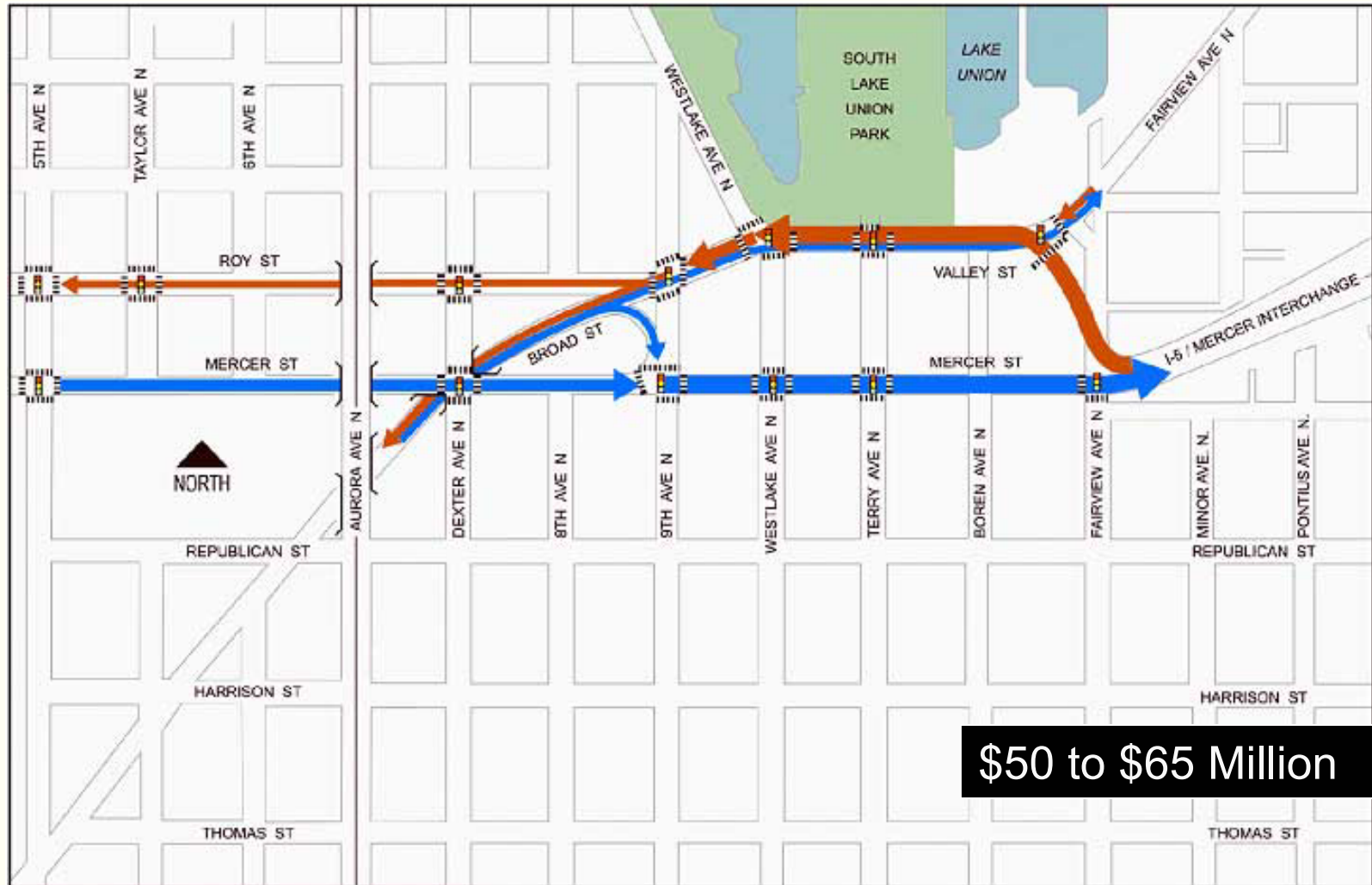
- Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Project – New Connections across Aurora Avenue
- Mercer Corridor Project – alternatives between I-5 and Aurora Avenue north

# The Alternatives

- Improve I-5 Off-Ramp
- Build Two-Way Mercer Boulevard
- Mercer Expressway

# Improve I-5 Off-Ramp

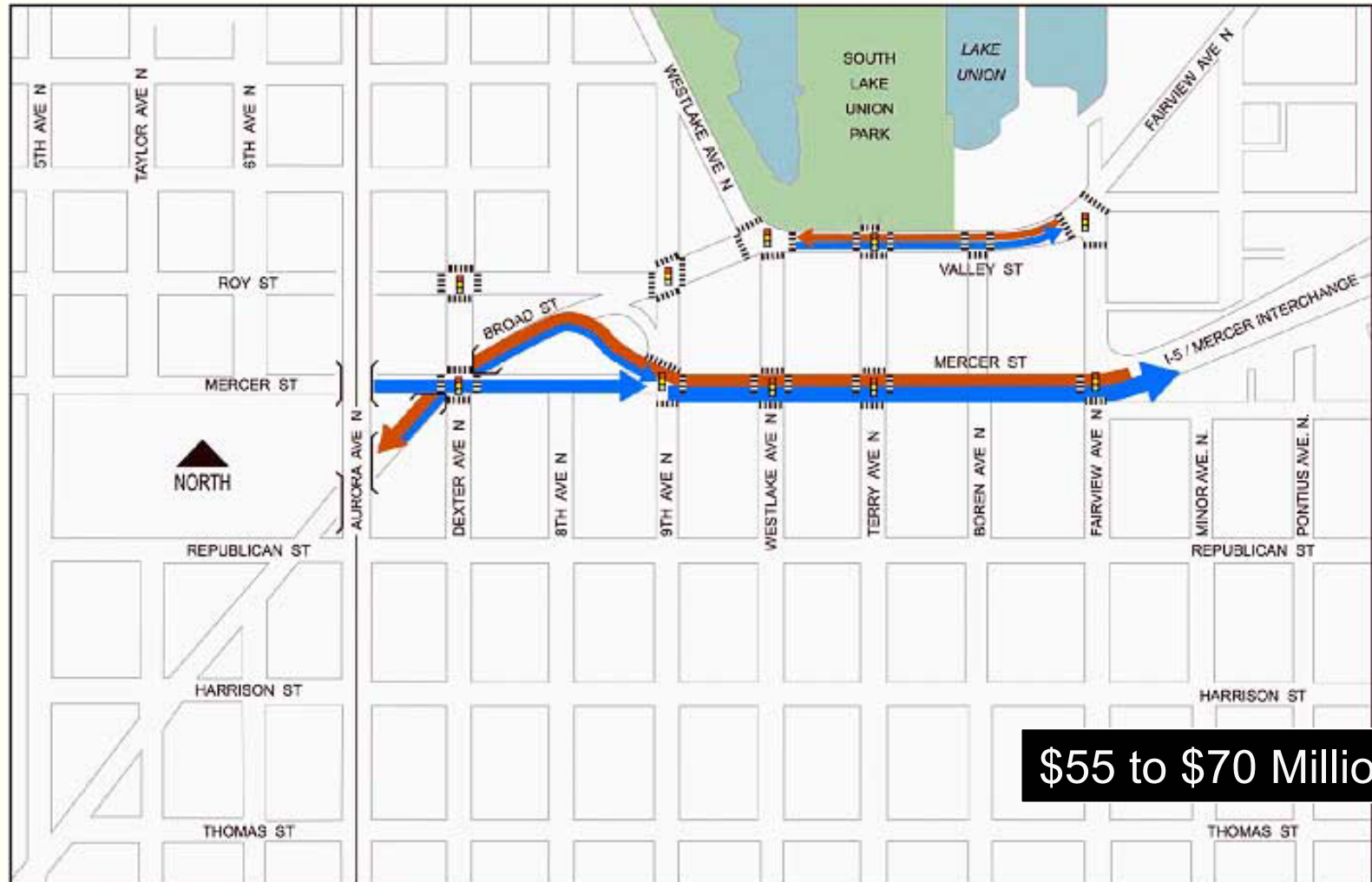
## Alternative A



**\$50 to \$65 Million**

# Build Two-Way Mercer Boulevard

## Alternative B





# Mercer Expressway

## Alternative C

\$125 to \$160 Million



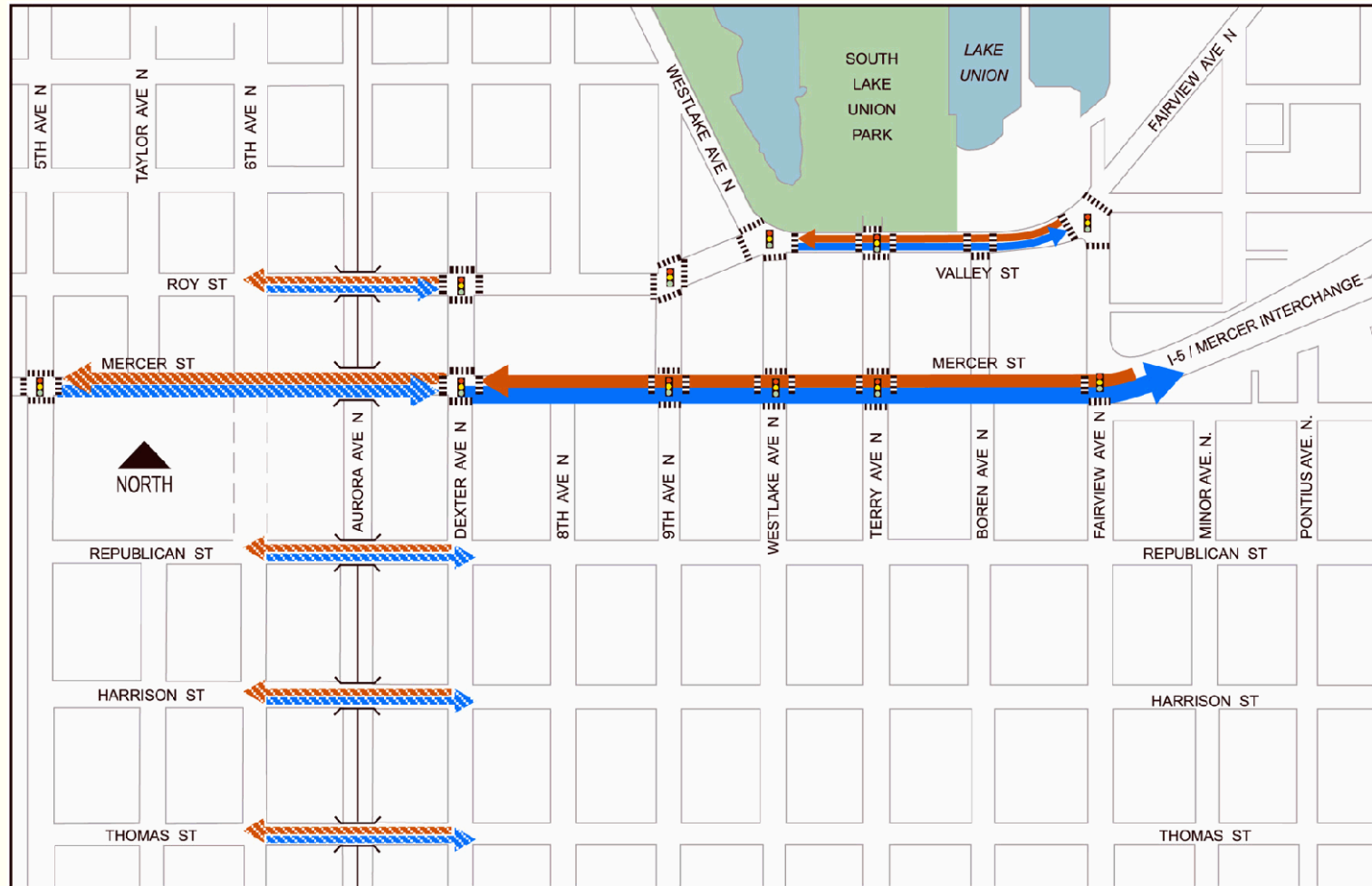
# Two-Way Mercer

with Viaduct Project (Widened Mercer Underpass)



# Two-Way Mercer

with Viaduct Project (Lowered Aurora)



# Overall Goals

Improve mobility



Reconnect the neighborhood



# Council Direction

- Resolution 30080 (1999)

Public objectives for sale of property

- Create an attractive gateway
- Promote a safe and active pedestrian environment
- Enhance visual relationships in the park vicinity
- Encourage alternative forms of transportation

- Resolution 30610 (2003)

Priorities to support redevelopment of the South Lake Union area

- Making transportation improvement to reconnect the South Lake Union street grid and promote connections with downtown and Seattle Center
- promoting pedestrian-oriented improvements

# Mercer Corridor Project Objectives

- Improve regional access and mobility to and through South Lake Union using a multi-modal (cars, trucks, transit, pedestrians, bicycles, etc.) approach.
- Provide better connections between South Lake Union and Queen Anne.
- Enhance the environment around South Lake Union Park.
- Improve safety for cars, bicycles and pedestrians throughout the corridor.
- Support economic development goals for South Lake Union.
- Reinforce Comprehensive Plan goals and policies.

# Route Travel Times

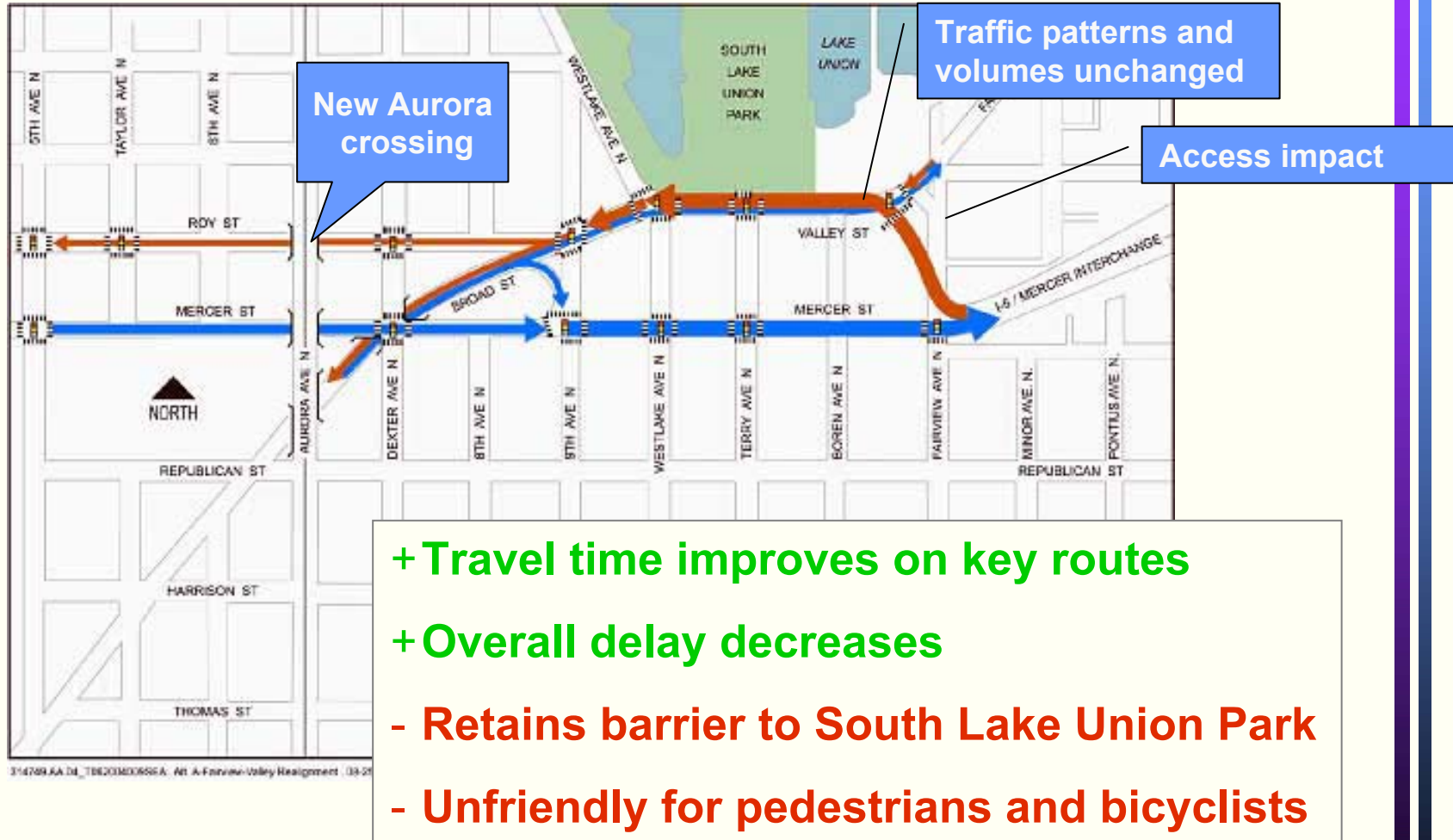


## Key Routes

- **I-5 and Queen Anne/Seattle Center**
- **I-5 and Southside Seattle Center**
- **I-5 and Westlake North**

# Off-Ramp Improvement

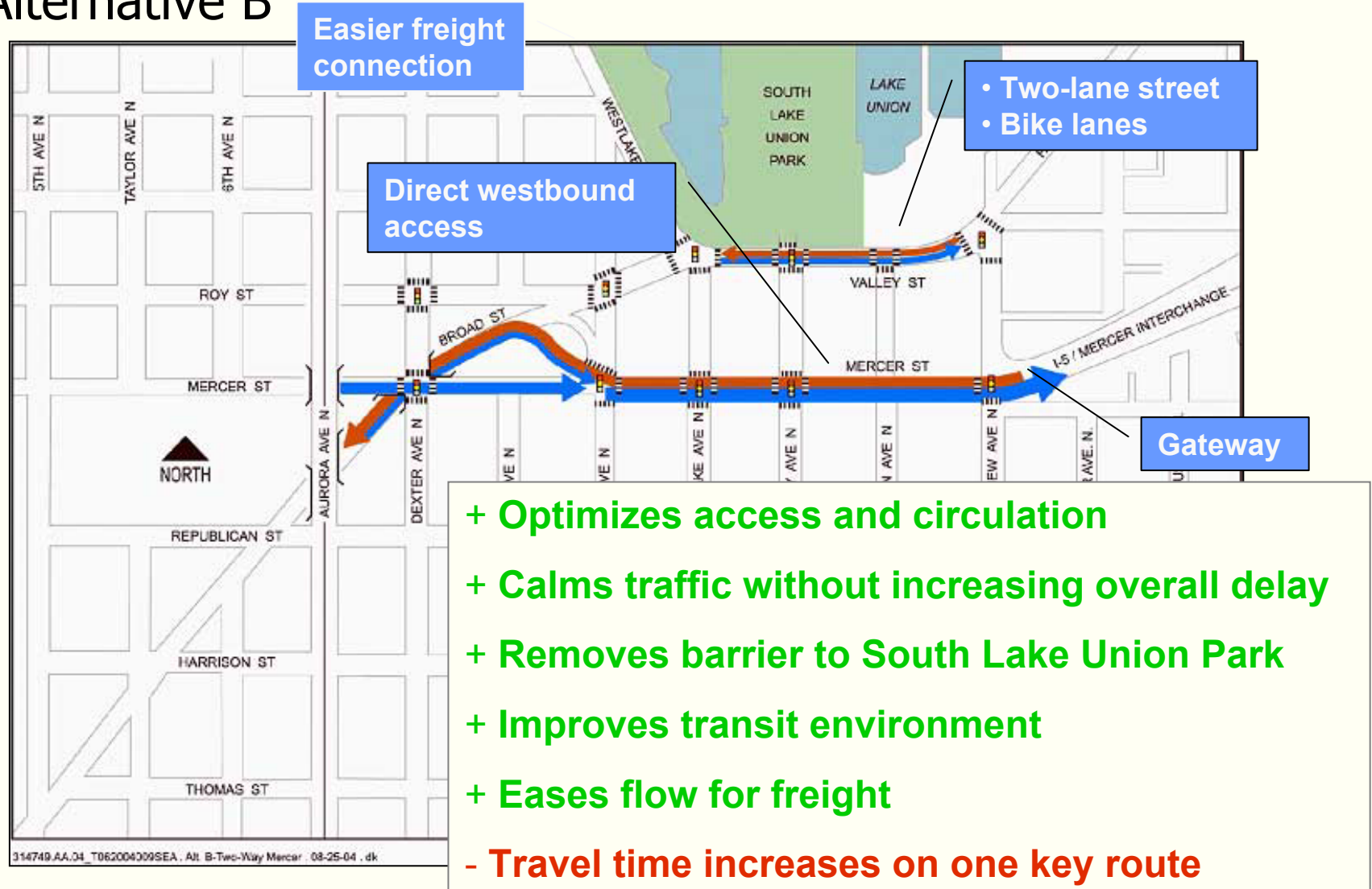
## Alternative A





# Two-Way Mercer

## Alternative B



# Mercer Expressway

## Alternative C



**+ East-west travel time improves**

**- Travel time from north (Westlake) increases**

**- Congestion in neighborhood increases**

**- Inconsistent with neighborhood plan**

# Two-Way Mercer



**Untangles  
the 'Mess'**

**Removes  
Barriers**

**Improves mobility through a balanced, multi-modal approach**

**Continues flow of freight and people through the corridor**

# Two-Way Mercer



**Creates a great place for the entire city on the Lake Union waterfront**  
**Connects the Neighborhood to South Lake Union Park**



# Let's Fix the Mess

## Recommendations and Next Steps

- Move forward on previous Council direction
- Designate Two-Way Mercer as the preliminary preferred alternative
- Move forward with the Environmental Assessment
- Continue coordinating with AWW Project
- Pursue funding opportunities